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## DARKENERS OF COUNSEL

BY BEULAH B. AMRAM

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“He was in logic a great critic,  
Profoundly skilled in analytic;  
He could distinguish and divide  
A hair 'twixt south and southwest side.”

—BUTLER'S “*Hudibras*.”

IN that lovely land where odes hang on hawthorns and elegies on brambles, where, under the greenwood tree, wandering lovers mingle happily with philosophical Touchstones and wise Corins and accommodating Williams, it is easy to agree with the good banished Duke that there is good in everything. In our more prosaic world the difficulty is greater; yet we, too, are busily seeking that one good thing even in things most evil. We have gone beyond the Pagan view of considering everything human to be interesting and consider everything natural not only interesting, but beautiful. We no longer condemn to an arid death a glowing poppy that has so far forgotten its humble origin as to seed itself among the aristocrats of the garden, spoiling with untutored and primitive beauty an artistically modulated color scheme. Indeed, if we are inclined to be philosophical, we may even moralize over its simple-minded obliteration of class distinctions. Furthermore, we have learned to consider everything, even sin, as natural. Christianity, as Anatole France points out, loved the sinner's foundation of very big sins as the first condition of repentance, without which there could be no Christian. We, on the other hand, accept the sinner as the inevitable and, therefore, natural product of immensely powerful forces. Agreeing that we are what earth and sky and air have made us, we like to account for the criminal's inconvenient propensities by remembering that he usually has had no earth at all, entirely too little sky, and a very bad kind of air. We are coming at last to

consider the sorry psychology of the weak quite as important a study as the perfected morality of the strong, and the criminal is receiving his share of attention and sympathy. We punish less; we reform more; we try to make over again the faulty product, and as one of the means to this end we encourage, in our social derelicts, the appreciation of the "best literature."

What shall be done for the reformation of that class of confirmed malefactor whose crime consists in slandering the dead and misleading the living, the critics, who, to add to their offence, have been brought up on the best literature? What hope is there for a man who confesses that he has spent three decades in a "critical" reading of literature, who admits that "the gods have made him critical," over whose pages "critical" dicta are thickly sprinkled? What shall be done to the critic who considers the thought of the Olympian Landor, the god-like giant, whose tongue was touched "with honey and with fire," as "never good for much, being at its best only not contemptible"? What shall be done to the man who, capable himself of saying, "He died (as men go) young," speaks of "the cockney level of Mrs. Browning at her unintelligible worst," of the woman who could feel and, feeling, could write, "The Cry of the Children," "Mother and Poet" and "Sonnets from the Portuguese"? And, head and front of his offending, what shall be done to the man who divides the admirers of George Eliot's genius—"coterie admiration," he calls their interest—into the æsthetics, who admired the creator of Tito, and the agnostics, who admired the translator of Strauss and the irregular partner of Lewes, and under these heads presumes to include all that went to make up that *grand' anima*? What shall be thought of the "critical acumen" of a man who, conceding that "Adam Bede" is extremely clever, assures us that no man who calls himself a critic can afford to ignore the fact that "Adam Bede" could scarcely be expected to fail, coming as it did at a time when Dickens's best work was done, Thackeray not yet come to full popularity, and Charlotte Brontë dead or dying? A man may be forgiven for being so mastered by his disapproval of priestless marriages as to depart from his ideal of being "*hübsch objectiv.*" But no writer who pretends to understand the conditions under which such work as George Eliot's is produced dare call the seclusion of her life, sensitive in spirit, delicate in

health as she was, the morbid and unnatural atmosphere of a close conservatory that could produce only flowers of inherent weakness. May Fortune send us soon again such "dead" blossoms as "Romola" and "Middlemarch"! No critic that pretends to understand humanity can with impunity call the result of the universal spontaneous recognition of George Eliot's genius "a well-engineered fame"—can assume to see in George Lewes's worship of her and her supreme intellectual and artistic gifts the shrewd admiration of "a literary trainer with a view to present success." Perhaps on that Parnassus that Lewes's devotion, if not his talents, have gained, on that sacred mount where she sits among her peers, he may still hold before her the shield of his love. Many a man has gained heaven for less! No writer who addresses himself to the mind or the heart of his readers can afford to be "*gemein*" or carelessly to dim the glory of a well-deserving fame. Pentheus died at the Mænads' hands, amid the deep dark woods of Cithæron, not because his ignorance did not recognize the god Dionysus, but because his godlessness mocked the service of the god and saw only shameful motives in the mystic exultation of the circling Mænads on the mountain.

It is not adverse criticism that a great man fears. He who writes many books invites many judges, says St. Jerome. Keats did not die because the Review did not appreciate the beauties of "Endymion." It was cynical brutality, made all the coarser by the pathetic modesty of his apologia, that broke his heart and deprived us of who knows what poetic treasures. "Go up, thou bald-head," cried the poor little city boys as Elijah went up to Beth-el. And "there came forth two she-bears out of the woods and tare forty and two children of them." So that we see that mockery even by the innocent is punishable. "*Die Göttin*," says Juno in Schiller's "Semele," "*rächt nichts so sehr als höhnisch Nasenrümpfen*." We may pity without condemning the man who admits that he has never been able to read through one of George Eliot's books with genuine and whole-hearted admiration. We may think it scarcely decent to flaunt such poverty. We may prefer the view that Lord Acton shared with M. Edmond Scherer that she was the most considerable literary personality that has appeared since the death of Goethe. It is the scornfully turned-up critical nose that arouses our ire.

Wordsworth advised the critics to spend on original work the time spent in writing critiques, arguing that, whereas a malicious criticism may do much harm, a stupid invention is harmless and useful in helping the critic to find his own level. Indeed, it is doubtful whether any one incapable himself of creation is fitted to criticise the work of others. It may be that only he who has known through what travail thought is born in words, who has subjected himself to the discipline of art, the constraint of form, the "*forma rigida e severa*," can appreciate, through knowledge of difficulties overcome, the value and meaning of any artistic production. The man who knows from his own failures how inadequately thought can be packed into a narrow phrase can read again into the written word of another the power that eluded and escaped the snare of language. It is just as difficult for the uninitiated to feel the significance of the fine points of a craft as for a foreigner to learn all the nuances of a foreign idiom. We may learnedly announce that Horace's verse is made up of three asclepiads and a catalectic trochaic tetrapody called a gliconic, but the knowledge cannot make us feel the fluent suavity of that verse as it is felt by the Italian poets who have adopted its metre and applied the ancient form to the expression of modern ideas. The criticism of such men as Horace, Boileau, Dryden, Johnson, Voltaire, Goethe, Heine, Carducci, have always been as invaluable as their distinctively creative work. We listen and rejoice when Browning writes of Shelley, when Swinburne writes of Meredith. Who can doubt that Carducci, to whom Virgil's verse was the stream murmuring in the white moonlight that floods the summer fields, the nightingale who pours his melody from the thicket, "*empie il vasto seren di melodia*," while the traveller pauses, forgetting time as he thinks of the golden hair of his beloved—who can doubt that he has reached nearer to the soul of the real Virgil than the glib young critics who tell us that Virgil has really been very much overrated, being at best but a weak imitation of Homer? Any schoolboy may tell us that it is "old fogey" to admire Carlyle, any art student can tell us that Ruskin did not know how to draw. They can be judged only by their peers.

It has been said that it is no harder to grow an oak than a violet. With the proper elements in the soil, the proper degree of heat and moisture, the seed, once germinated, will

grow of itself. The miracle lies in what is stored within that seed. The visible world lies equally before all of us. The elements to whose existence most of us are oblivious are to the artist the agencies that nourish the power that lies hidden in the mysterious reaches of his brain. The miracle lies in the stored-up capacity that we call the creative faculty. As in the plant, it is the germination that is the important step. It is the mysterious action by which what has existed as dim *Ahnungen* in the soul takes form and shape and grows of itself from the first desire for expression. And so the beauty and the power are liberated and made real for all of us. We can analyze the splendor of the iris whose stately head crowns the reedy growth beside the stream in June; we can classify its structure, discover the elements of its color, explore the secret chamber where its odor hides, but by no effort can we produce it or explain the mystery of its overpowering appeal. The psychologist can measure with his instruments the most delicate emotions. Only the artist can reproduce them. We cannot enough admire, we cannot enough wonder at this wonderful faculty. The observant student may be content to see what lies before him with the passionless eyes of the analyst. The great scientist is always alive to the miracle of creation.

It seems to me that if our critics had not, with their youth and their simplicity, lost their faculty of admiration we should have less of the kind of criticism that too often arouses our ire and, beguiling us to write criticisms of criticisms, spreads further the evil we bewail. Evil begets evil. Our economists lay many of our national ills to the fact that men take too little for themselves out of the inexhaustible earth and live too much on each other. Likewise while true creative work finds its material in the infinite treasure-house of the visible and invisible world, false criticism lives on the blood of other men's brains.

Poets, perhaps because of their child-like natures, may be forgiven for much "uncritical admiration." Things have changed since Hesiod's day, and though potter may still hate potter, poet no longer hates poet. Most great writers have had enthusiastic admirations, worshipping each other's great gifts and allowing the stimulus of this admiration to react on their own work. Robert Browning admired them all and was loved by all, even by such vigorous thinkers and haters as Carlyle and Landor and Ruskin and Swinburne, esteem-

ing each rightly because esteeming highly. The poet whose function it is to see in the finite the germ of the infinite, in the accidental the root of the essential, can be forgiven for worshipping Victor Hugo as "the father of all souls that look upon the sun"—Giuseppe Mazzini as the man

"whose praise no thought may reach,  
No words may weigh."

The critic whose Olympian function it is to weigh, to estimate, sees much more calmly, much more judicially—how much less truly!—the one as "a great though not rationally great Frenchman," the other as a "remarkably dull Italian." Yet in the long run it may be almost as important to mould the thought of a nation as to write a flawless lyric.

A man who satirically admits that his admiration for his subject never reaches boiling-point is, by that very moderation, disqualified to get at the heart of his subject. Stevenson regretted having written on François Villon, because "by the principle of the art" as he put it, his low opinion of Villon unfitted him to judge the picturesque vagabond. Admiration need not become a disease, as Macaulay called it, nor prevent a critic from being humanly at home with his subject. Mr. Chesterton worships Browning and Dickens; yet he is terribly at his ease in Zion in his treatment of them, as the Italians are familiarly at home in their churches, yet not blind to their beauty. And his books on those two delightful subjects are the best that have yet been done. Not for nothing do our dictionaries give us as synonyms "critic" and "amateur." Browning loved his star that dartled the red and blue, because it opened its heart to him. Rather, his star opened its heart to him because he loved it, as in that garden where the Sensitive Plant grew, all the flowers gave their sweetest perfume to the Spirit of Love that tended them.

A woman once told me that she thought the adoring attitude one to be discouraged in young people as tending to interfere with their development by making them too chameleon-like. Is it not better, as being more modest, to take color from brilliant surroundings than to retain unglorified the drab of a mediocre individuality? The only thing that redeems mediocrity is its modesty, its capacity for admiration. Some may be quite sure that they never mistook Mr. Trollope for one of the immortals, may be proud to remem-

ber that in early youth they had an inkling of Tennyson's defects, or came to a conclusion about Thackeray that they never have had occasion to change. Huxley says somewhere that men ought to be strangled at a certain age to prevent them from becoming impervious to new impressions; and few men would like to admit that thirty years had not altered the inspired views of their youth. Although I admit that to-day the pathos of Sidney Carton is less heartbreaking to me than when I shed buckets of tears over his heroic end, though I agree that Stephen Guest was not worthy of Maggie Tulliver and used more attar-of-roses than a gentleman should, I am proud to remember that at the age of twelve I saw no fault in either Charles Dickens or George Eliot.

The attitude of the humble worshipper is much healthier as it is much rarer than that of the mortal hunting for spots on the sun. After all, it is so much easier to sympathize with failure than with success. It takes only common humanity to weep with our bereaved neighbor. It takes real bigness and generosity to rejoice without envy in our neighbor's happiness. Athens found insupportable the praise of Aristides's perfection. We are still very far from the hope that Mr. Meredith expresses in "The Lark Ascending," of a day when the millions shall rejoice in "the voice of one for millions," that gives "their spirit voice."

Appreciation, however, is a purely personal question, a matter of taste, that far from setting up any standard of judgment is merely an admission that all books are not for all men at all times. Especially is this true of poetry, which, by its short and complete forms, offers the poet the opportunity for presenting countless moments of his experience, each complete in itself, from which each may seek and find for himself what suits his taste. Some one has said that a difference of taste in jokes is productive of much domestic discord. Perhaps this comes painfully home to those of us that are condemned to see our unregenerate children prefer the humor of the so-called comic newspaper supplements to that of—Shakespeare's clowns, for instance. In all the ways of thought the same diversity of taste exists and our problem is to accept all tastes with equanimity. The strong meat of Whitman is poison to those of weaker digestion. Shakespeare, "our monarch of poets," is violent to Taine, not to be endured by Tolstoi. Maeterlinck, the exquisite dream-



er, is only short of insane to Nordau. Ruskin hated the splendors of Ghirlandajo that most of us return many times to see again in their dim chapel in Santa Maria Novella. Many even get less pleasure out of the stupendous "Last Judgment" that fills the great wall in the Sistine Chapel than in those lightly moulded, delicately tinted pictures Simone Memmi painted, that all the world might know the faces of Laura and Petrarca. How many moods are there in each mind! The poem that was enclosed in a prickly burr before the winter fire may open its heart to us under blossoming laburnums. The essay that delighted us in the shaded place where the fish were biting may seem very puerile by the study table. How many moods are there in the universal mind of which each man is but a facet!

In the great world of letters many voices call with many different burdens. There is place for all—for Homer and Aristophanes, Cicero and Juvenal, Petrarca and Leopardi, Shakespeare and Shelley, Racine and Voltaire, Lessing and Heine, Emerson and Mark Twain. From their secured eminence, no violence or treachery shall displace them. Only we do not put Goethe in our pocket to fill in the waits at the circus, nor declaim Dante at a wedding breakfast, nor Lucian at a funeral. Not all are fitted to carry the world on their shoulders or to bring the light of a new era. All may not hear from the sea and the forest the voice that spoke to Shelley, all may not re-echo the cries of universal life that called to Shakespeare. Some must content themselves with but the faint reflection of those lofty and pensive visions. Yet in the Temple of the Arts there is a place and need for all that write out of sincerity. Who knows what may be the fruit of their sowing? A place for all, except the presumptuous and arrogant critic. Yet even he has his use. For by his example he may teach us to avoid that critical attitude toward masterpieces that Mr. Mahaffy traces from its birth in Alexandria to its culmination in the criticism that he calls the bane of modern life.

We need men who, through much study and thought, can tell us the background against which a work of art stands out, what Taine calls "the race, the surroundings and the epoch." We need men who can trace the development and relation of ideas, the development of the technique of art. Above all, we need men who, through their feeling for sincerity, their insight into meaning, their sense of form,

can appreciate and interpret, who, adding to their keenness of perception the self-consciousness of apperception, fulfil Sainte-Beuve's ideal of a critic, as a man who knows how to read and to teach others to read.

"God uses us to help each other so;  
Lending our minds out,"

says Fra Lippi. But we do not need men to tell us what a thing is *not*. In the whole of Matthew Arnold's beautiful essay on Heine he gives only sixteen lines to the consideration of what Heine lacked. He does not tell us that Heine undoubtedly possessed a mordant wit, but that he lacked the Olympian calm of Goethe. Nor that Mr. Swinburne has a fine sense of rhythm, but is without the restraint of Tennyson. Nor that Mr. Pater is scholarly and delicate, but lacks the ruggedness of Landor. Nor that while Charles Dickens has a certain, though limited, view of the irony of life he is deficient in the psychological subtlety that marks George Eliot. Nor that "if Browning had not the finest seventeenth-century magic of remoteness of matter and melody of form he had the queer mixture of ore and dross, the want of criticism, the incompleteness which mark all but one or two of our seventeenth-century men." *Si foret in terris, rideret Democritus.*

There is a legend that when Adam was barely an hour old God called together all the animals, that Adam might name them. And Adam, filled with the holy spirit, named all in turn, suiting each name to the peculiarity of the animal. The application of the legend lies in its comprehension of the manifold diversities of Nature. Sir Thomas Browne protested against the logic of calling an elephant or a toad ugly, since each in its outward shape expressed "the actions of its inward form," understanding in the correspondence of spirit and form the beauty that follows when each fulfils the law of its nature. We do not reproach the hollyhock for its height nor the snowdrop for its modesty. No wise man complains that the lion does not sing his heart out to the roses in the moonlight. Yet we are solemnly assured that George Eliot—Evangelical, Positivist, philosophical George Eliot—was "insufficiently devoted to the great god Nonsense." This kind of criticism reminds me of Touchstone's delightful view of life in the Forest of Arden:

"In respect that it is solitary, I like it very well; but in respect that it is private, it is a very vile life. Now in respect it is in the fields, it

pleaseth me well; but in respect it is not in the court, it is tedious. As it is a spare life, look you, it fits my humor well; but as there is no more plenty in it, it goes much against my stomach."

Nor do we need to be reminded again and again of those things that are as obvious as that the buds swell in spring-time and that the clouds fill themselves with their mist buckets from the sea. What new thing do we learn when we are told that "Tristram of Lyonesse" is long, that "The Ring and the Book" is voluble, that "Sweetness and Light" is full of repetitions of phrase, that Pickwick and his friends are types, not men, that Dorothea Brooke is very solemn? All this is for the simplest to see, like Corin's natural philosophy that taught him that it is the property of rain to wet and of fire to burn, and that a great cause of the night is lack of light. That Swinburne, despite the seeming richness of his vocabulary, has, after all, a limited number of rhymes, that he too often rhymes "laughter" and "after" as too often Carducci says, "*Tutt' ora tace*"—does that make one any the less the supreme master of English song, the other the greatest Italian poet of his century? Such judgments are but weak handles to catch great men by. The faults are open to all. "Theophrastus Such" and "Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau" are judged in that they are not read. But not forty thousand critics could convince us that "Mrs. Poyser" and "Pompilia" are not writ clear for all eternity. What we want to be made to feel is the character and significance of the gift that each original genius bears within him, the gift that special circumstances have developed into something that is the man himself, not to be compared, certainly not to be confused, with any other. That we can do only when we shall have dropped the habit of seeking confirmation of our own beliefs in the works of others and have sought to know what the artist had to say, what excuse he had for breaking the natural reserve of the soul.

"Stat magni nominis umbra  
Qualis frugifero quercus sublimis in agro."

Like a lofty oak in a fruitful field! Which of our sacrilegious critics hesitates, with weak arm, to attempt to fell the lofty oaks that spring up so thickly in the fruitful field of our literature? The passion for rehabilitation is growing and, truly, it is a worthy thing to recall the forgotten words of men not fit for the grand first ranks, yet not meriting

oblivion. But still stronger is the passion for lessening the glamour that clings to great names, for determining the exact reasons why what the world has been content to consider masterpieces fall "just short of the highest," to determine the exact point at which they "simulate if they do not possess immortal qualities." That, I think, would take all the natural skill of a prophet and the acquired skill of a son of a prophet. Oh, for the faculty to determine all these delicate points, to compass all the complexities of thought and feeling with foot-rules and test-tubes! Just as the complexity of our life is not to be bound by maxims, just so little is the expression of that varied life to be judged and weighed by critical formulas and estimated by generalities. Consider the mystery that hides behind the barrier of personality in ourselves, in those nearest to us. Yet our critics hesitate little to estimate by one rapid glance, to reproduce in one sweeping phrase the personality that hides among the printed pages. To be told that Robert Browning is broad and long—oh, very long—but not deep, is to be told nothing. To be assured that there is nothing in Swinburne that resembles a thought judges not the poet, but the critic who cannot see that such a poem as "The Last Oracle" tells us more than pages of comparative mythology.

A scientist can construct a prehistoric monster from a few fossilized bones, a whole civilization from a few scattered utensils. In the whole of nature, each little object bears its definite relation to the whole great scheme and contains in itself the secret of the whole. "In the core of one pearl all the shade and the shine of the sea," sang Robert Browning. Mme. Curie must test fifteen tons of pitchblende to secure one-hundredth of a milligram of precious polonium. Winter's haze must die before the might of the returning sun, all the reawakened hues of earth and sky must mingle in one splendid weft shot through with golden light before one yellow bell can break from the bare wood of the forsythia. All the thoughts and impressions of years must be sifted and analyzed and compared and blended before the artist shall produce the work that is to be disposed of in one comprehensive critical phrase. It is not to be wondered at that artists have always hated the critics. It is strange that Dante did not discover an especially unpleasant corner of the Inferno for them. George Lewes kept them and their praise and blame from the "close

conservatory " where Tito grew. Dumas hurled his choicest invectives at their unhappy heads. To Shelley, the critic of Keats was merely " a noteless blot on a remembered name." Heine thought criticism no longer the occupation even of the devil.

"Doch will er nicht mehr mit Kritik sich befassen  
Die hat er jetzt gänzlich überlassen  
Der teuren Grossmutter, Hecate."

And Heine's Hecate was not that Homeric figure suggestive of Maeterlinck, of a Hecate sitting in her cave, veiled in a shining mist, thinking delicate thoughts, but the fearful Hecate, " the close contriver of all harms," that commends the pains of the secret, black and midnight hags who brew their shuddering potion in " Macbeth."

In the ballad " Der Zauberlehrling " Goethe tells the story of the magician's apprentice, who, proud in his knowledge of signs and words, sends the old broomstick to the stream for water. But the spirit whom he summons he cannot dismiss, because he has forgotten the word, and not until he is almost drowned does the master return with the warning:

"Denn als Geister  
Ruft euch nur zu seinem Zwecke  
Erst hervor der alte Meister."

Just such spirits are many of our vaunted critical theories—magical when controlled by the master, rebellious and destructive when used by the ambitious apprentice who knows all the signs and magic words. In the hands of a master all the disorderly and turbulent array of contradictory facts and irrelevant details of history fall into their assigned places, leaving one clear view of order and significance. But the sad history of the world has shown how harmful is the use of their thaumaturgic paraphernalia by unskilled and proud apprentices. Racial distinctions discovered by the genius of philologists become instruments of wrath in the hands of nationalists, to whom the love of mine means the hatred of what is not mine. Evolutionary doctrines which gave definite form and meaning to pantheistic ideas of unity in nature are called in to settle the question of woman suffrage by referring to the biology of the amœba. Loving our theories and our labels, we confidently distinguish between the creative and the critical faculties. As if creation were not the conscious and unconscious critical selection of

the fit, critical rejection of the unfit. As if criticism that explains underlying laws, that absorbs and transforms into something new in form and spirit, were not performing the creative function of being articulate. The power of the critic who pierces to the heart of a subject is closely allied to the power of the poet who plucks out the heart of mankind's mystery. Such pieces of analysis and summing-up as the chapter in Taine's "English Literature" called "Ideas and Productions" or any of the wonderful chapters of Buckle's "History of Civilization," are no different in their effect from the monologues of Hamlet or Caponsacchi. We talk glibly about the masculine faculty of creation and judgment, the feminine faculty of receiving, assimilating and reproducing. Yet, if Mrs. Poyser is merely the reproduction of George Eliot's mother, Sairey Gamp is no less the reproduction of Charles Dickens's nurse. Unfortunately, in criticism we have not yet adopted the scientist's habit of making his working hypothesis into law only on the support of cumulative and incontrovertible evidence.

We are told that the arts should under no circumstances be permitted to encroach on each other's provinces. Long ago Lucian advised the same sort of specializing. At a legitimately convoked Popular Assembly of the Gods it was enacted that "each god employ himself solely about his own proper business: that neither Athena practise medicine, nor Asklepius trade in oracles, nor Apollo have all to himself so many departments, but choose some one—either be a prophet or a professor of music or a physician." Pictures should not tell stories, prose should not be poetic, poetry certainly not be prose, music not be constrained to express definite dramatic meaning. Yet are we grateful for Botticelli and Ruskin and Walt Whitman and Richard Wagner, who do all these proscribed things. If theories were infallible, life's problems had all been solved long ago. On the other hand, the very theories that sound indefensible as such may be most acceptable when made practical in the arts. When Richard Wagner solemnly undertakes to prove that the music drama shall concentrate in itself all the arts—when he proposes, as George Moore puts it in "Evelyn Inness," that the Venus de Milo shall shrink away before Frau Sucher in beer-garden attitudes—we smile or sigh, according to the nature and degree of our philosophy. But

when Siegfried is carried on the shoulders of his men over the darkened hills, while that solemn music sounds, with memories of his sunny youth and promise of heroic apotheosis, all the arts seem merged in the wonder of such music. Perhaps we feel it to be "antecedently improbable" that there should be warrant for the claim of modern Hellenes, that there lie miraculous powers in the reviving art of dancing. But when one single delicate figure walking slowly up and down a stage, against a draped background of neutral gray, can make her meaning so real that, looking back, we feel that we have actually seen that procession of stately Greek priestesses bearing their gifts into the shrine into whose mists they seem to fade, we forget our theories and feel that not too much has been claimed for the wonders of the art of dancing.

It may be true in the field of ethics that that is immoral in the individual which, followed by the majority, would lead to dissolution. In the field of art, it is true that many a characteristic that is made charming by the originality and sincerity of the artist becomes weak or artificial in the hands of imitators. But no great artist works with his eye on the effect on the vulgar. It is not a fault in Michelangelo that the fruits of his power and colossal imagination became to lesser minds models for sculpture, which substituted size for grandeur, for painting, which put contortion in the place of tragic emotion. It is not a fault in Matthew Arnold that his love of repetition and his suave urbanity may become tiresome and affected in a writer less anxious than he to impress what he considers to be an important point, less determined to refrain from vulgarity. It is not a fault in Walter Pater that his delicacy of thought and perfection of style may become affectation and preciosity in the hands of a writer in whom exquisiteness and finish are not essential parts of character and mental habit. Restraint is easy enough for most of us that can so easily exhaust an idea, that have difficulty enough in seeing *one* point of view clearly. Any child can drive old Dobbin who has seen a lifetime of patient service behind the plough. But what of a Pegasus that cannot bear a bridle, that rears and leaps and flies? What of those unfortunate geniuses that do not know when to stop, that, not fortunate enough to think in one image and one phrase, must see so primitive an emotion as Love, for instance, in half a hundred different images as in

Swinburne's prelude to "Tristram of Lyonesse"—that, not able to tell a simple story of murder with the directness of a chronicler, must tell it from ten points of view in four hundred and eighty-one pages? Yet we all love energy and endurance. Why should that long-windedness that is so admirable in an acrobat be so reprehensible in a poet? Enjoy and admire, the critics tell us, but be careful how you imitate. Well may we be careful with our weak powers to imitate the inimitable. Let them look to their laurels!

Indeed, we have too much imitation. The time will never come again when the people will march in joy to see the masterpiece carried to its place in the Cathedral, proud that they have bought some part of that gold that shines so wonderfully from angel's wing or bishop's stole. Each one of us is too anxious to prove that, though he cannot plan the whole, he can paint one smallest section and sign it with his own name. Perhaps it cannot be otherwise in a democratic world, where the high must be levelled that all may be equal, like the grass blades on a flawless lawn. Perhaps it is not even desirable that it should be otherwise. It may be short-sighted to confuse the vulgarization of art with its popularization. But sometimes it seems as if the nightingale's voice were lost in the clamor of the sparrows. Sometimes it seems that the wonders of the florist's art, which gives us jonquils in January, had spoiled us for the miracle of that first golden cup breaking out of the wintry earth.

In the mosaics that fill the gilded apses of old Italian churches, we do not exclaim at the woodenness of the little lambs like none that ever lived. We wonder rather that with such means there could be produced what should look at all like a lamb. Most of us are but as workers in mosaic, carefully joining the fragments of our thought, happy if our finished work bears any resemblance to the life it would portray. Let us not prescribe rules to the genius that works above our head, whose broad, free strokes make clear the vision that he sees of sibyls, prophets and divinities.

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